

Moran Sponsors Legislation to Support Rural Hospitals

New CMS Policy Will Force Kansas Hospitals to Cut Services

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran sponsored H.R. 6376 last week, to support rural hospitals and increase patients' access to outpatient therapeutic services.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced a new rule, that requires a physician to be present for the delivery of outpatient therapeutic services, such as drug and blood infusions, pulmonary rehabilitation services, and psychiatric services, which are currently performed by non-physician practitioners, subject to a physician's guidelines. Rural hospitals, which routinely face physician workforce shortages, will have great difficulty meeting this new requirement.

"This new CMS rule is ill-advised and will force rural hospitals in Kansas and across the country to limit services to patients," Moran said. "Many Kansas hospitals face physician shortages and will find it very difficult to meet this burdensome supervision requirement. This policy change will force many hospitals to cut therapy services that Kansans rely on everyday."

“The new CMS rule being imposed on rural hospitals will take the ‘access’ out of ‘Critical Access Hospitals,’” said Michael Ryan, CEO of Hillsboro Community Medical Center. “We have many patients that come to us for quality care delivered conveniently in their own community. If this rule is not changed, we will not be able to provide the services our patients need. Because we do not have the resources to employ physicians and have them at our beck and call, 24/7, our patients and their families will suffer.”

Moran’s legislation would allow qualified non-physician practitioners to provide outpatient therapeutic services under a physician’s orders, without requiring the physician’s presence. The bill does provide an exception process for high-risk procedures that require a higher level of supervision. Moran led efforts to introduce H.R. 6376 because if CMS fails to modify its policy through regulatory channels, legislation will be required to change the policy.

As Chairman of the House Rural Health Care Coalition, Moran authored a bipartisan letter on September 17th requesting that CMS re-evaluate this policy to afford flexibility to rural hospitals. Sixty six Members of Congress joined Moran in making this request.

Moran has visited each of the 76 hospitals in the “Big First” district, many of which would be adversely affected by this new CMS rule.

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